

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
WELSH LANGUAGE CABINET STEERING GROUP
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Authors: Wendy Edwards, Head of Community Learning (01443 744111)
Steffan Gealy, Service Manager – Welsh Language (01443 744079)

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN WITH THE FFORWM IAITH ON THE DRAFT
WELSH LANGUAGE PROMOTION STRATEGY**

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with the results of the consultation undertaken with the Fforwm Iaith on the draft Welsh Language Promotion Strategy.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Welsh Language Cabinet Steering Group:

- 2.1 Consider the content of the report;
- 2.2 Discuss the feedback provided by Fforwm Iaith;
- 2.3 Decide whether to accept the recommendations made by Fforwm Iaith in respect of the draft strategy prior to referring the draft strategy for consideration by Cabinet.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council is required by standard 145 of the Compliance Notice issued under section 44 of Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 to develop a 5 Year Strategy to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language in the county borough and to publish the strategy on the Council's website by 30th October 2016. This strategy must include:
- A target (in terms of the percentage of speakers in the county) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the county by the end of the 5 year period;
 - Statement setting out how the Council intends to reach that target.

- 3.2 The strategy must be reviewed and a revised version placed on the Council website within 5 years of its publication.
- 3.3 Since the issuing of the Compliance Notice on 30th September 2015 (as amended in September 2016), the Welsh Government has developed, and consulted on its own draft strategy *A million Welsh speakers by 2050*. If this strategy is approved by Welsh Government in its current form, Councils will need to identify challenging targets in order to contribute to the ambitious vision of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050. The national context needs to be considered when considering the Council's own strategy for the promotion and facilitation of the Welsh Language.
- 3.4 At a meeting held on 10th October, 2016 the Committee decided to refer the draft Welsh Language Promotion Strategy to the county's Fforwm Iaith as the strategy in its current form identifies targets for their member organisations as well as targets that specifically relate to the Council. As such it was felt that each organisation should have an opportunity to identify whether the targets assigned to them were realistic or whether additional support would be required in order to achieve them.

4. Fforwm Iaith feedback and recommendations

- 4.1 A meeting of Fforwm Iaith took place on 4th November, 2016 where the only topics for consideration were the draft Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The full Fforwm Iaith feedback can be seen at Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Due to the integral nature of the above documents it was recognised that targets set in the WESP need to be consistent with targets and actions relating to education and early years provision identified in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy if the strategy is to achieve its aim of increasing the number of Welsh speakers in the county borough over the next five years and beyond.
- 4.3 In general although Fforwm Iaith members welcomed the fact that a draft strategy had been developed, there was concern that in its current format the strategy placed responsibility on other organisations for achievement of many of the targets whereas the responsibility for the implementation of the strategy, from a legal perspective, lies entirely with the Council. It was also noted that whereas the Council would be accountable to the Welsh Language Commissioner for the achievement of the targets outlined in the strategy, it would be unable to influence the performance of partners unless it had a Service Level Agreement with these organisations for the delivery (and

funding) of specific targets especially those that were over and above what they are currently funded to deliver.

- 4.4 An in-depth discussion took place between members and it was recommended that the strategy should be split into two parts in order to identify areas of responsibility and accountability:
- Part 1 should identify what the Council is responsible for delivering and/or facilitating;
 - Part 2 should identify what other organisations are already funded to deliver and what targets they are required to meet under their current contracts.
- 4.5 Any gaps in provision that are evident and which need to be addressed in order to achieve the overall target set in respect of the increase in the number of Welsh speakers within the next 5 years, will need to be considered, and a decision taken by appropriate Council services as to whether they will need to commission external partners to address them.
- 4.6 Members of Fforwm Iaith identified their readiness to work with the Council to achieve the targets set in the draft strategy but noted that a lack of capacity was an issue for all of them.

5. Conclusion

Members of Fforwm Iaith recognise that they have an important role to play in the development of the Welsh language in the county borough. Most of the member organisations have been involved in this work over many decades and have an excellent track record for provision of Welsh language services. However, the members were concerned that the draft strategy appeared to place a responsibility on them that exceeded their remit and capacity and would also potentially place the Council in a precarious position of having to report on outcomes over which they had no control.

The recommendations highlighted above are designed to clarify the responsibilities of the Council for implementation of the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy while recognising the contribution that can be made by Fforwm Iaith members to the overall outcome under their current funding regimes. It should also make it easier for the Council to identify any shortfall in provision that needs to be addressed if the overall aim of increasing the percentage of Welsh speakers in the county borough is to be achieved over the next 5 years.